

IN THE CLAIMS:

The text of all pending claims, (including withdrawn claims) is set forth below. Cancelled and not entered claims are indicated with claim number and status only. The claims as listed below show added text with underlining and deleted text with ~~strikethrough~~. The status of each claim is indicated with one of (original), (currently amended), (cancelled), (withdrawn), (new), (previously presented), or (not entered).

1. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method performed by a processor for conducting a poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the polling method comprising:

a first questioning performed by a first terminal by presenting an input form with a question to a first respondent;

obtaining performed by the first terminal a free reply by accepting input onto the input form by a first respondent of an unguided reply to said question;

a first storing for storing in a processing server the free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

closing performed by the first terminal the input form presented to the first respondent;

a second questioning performed by a second terminal by presenting an input form with said question and the stored free reply to a second respondent after storing the input free reply; and

accepting performed by the second terminal a choice of the stored free reply as a reply to said question on the input form presented to the second respondent.

2. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 1, further comprising:

obtaining performed by the second terminal an elective reply by accepting from a second respondent selection of a reply presented in said presenting to the second, respondent

a second storing in the processing server of ~~stering~~ an elective input by the second respondent; and

compiling by repeating said first questioning, said obtaining the free reply, said first storing, said second questioning, said presenting, said obtaining an elective reply, and said second storing, and collecting and compiling elective replies and free replies from said respondent group.

3. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 1, further comprising a first determining performed by the processing server to determine whether a free reply input by a first respondent and a predetermined reply option presented are substantially the same, said presenting further presenting at least one predetermined reply option.

4. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 3, wherein said first storing stores in the processing server said free reply as a reply option to said question, upon said first determining having determined that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are not substantially the same.

5. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A polling method according to claim 3, wherein: upon said first determining having determined that said free reply input by said first respondent is substantially the same as said predetermined reply, said compiling compiles said free reply as an elective reply made by selection of said predetermined reply.

6. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 3, further comprising confirming performed by the processing server upon said first determining having determined that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are substantially the same, accepting from said first respondent confirmation as to whether or not the determination is correct; wherein

said compiling is carried out if said determination is confirmed to be correct.

7. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to any of claims 1, 2, 4, 5 or 6, further comprising conditions-setting performed by the processing server by accepting settings on conditions for designating at least one or more first respondents; wherein:

in said first questioning, said question is presented to one or more first respondents who have been extracted based on said conditions.

8. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to any of claims 2, 4, 5, or 6, further comprising:

a second determining performed by the processing server of increasing a count of reply options to said question when a free reply is stored in said first storing, and determining whether the count of reply has reached a predetermined maximum value;

a third storing in the processing server of storing correlatively with said question options

that said presenting has presented to second respondents; and

a re-surveying performed by the processing server of, upon said second determining having determined that said reply options count has reached said maximum value, extracting based on data stored in said third storing second respondents who have made elective replies from options numbering a count that is a predetermined minimum value or less, and presenting said extracted second respondents with said question.

9. (PREVIOUSLY PRESENTED) A polling method according to either claim 1 or claim 2, further comprising:

by repeating said first questioning, said obtaining a free reply and said first storing; and controlling which said iterating terminated, and said presenting and said second questioning are performed.

10. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling device for conducting a poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the polling device comprising:

a first question unit means for presenting an input form with a question to a first respondent;

a free reply unit means for obtaining a free reply by accepting input onto the input form by a first respondent of an unguided reply to said question;

a first storage sending unit configured to send a means for processing server the storing the free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

a closing unit configured to close means for closing the input form presented to the first respondent;

a receiving unit configured to receive, from the processing server, an input form with the question and the free reply as a reply option to said question;

a second question unit configured to present means for presenting an the received input form with said question and the stored-free reply to a second respondent after storing the input free reply; and

an accepting unit configured to accept means for accepting a choice of the stored-free reply as a reply to said question on the input form presented to the second respondent.

11. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling computer product for conducting a poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the

computer product for causing a computer to function as:

a first question unit means configured to present for presenting an input form with a question to a first respondent;

a free reply unit means for configured to obtain -obtaining-a free reply by accepting input onto the input form by a first respondent of an unguided reply to said question;

a first storage sending unit configured to send a means for processing server the storing the free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

a closing unit configured to close -means for closing the input form presented to the first respondent;

a receiving unit configured to receive, from the processing server, an input form with the question and the free reply as a reply option to said question;

a second question unit configured to present means for presenting an the received input form with said question and the stored free reply to a second respondent after storing the input free reply; and

an accepting unit configured to accept means for accepting a choice of the stored-free reply as a reply to said question on the input form presented to the second respondent.

12. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A computer-readable recording medium on which is recorded a polling program for conducting a poll on a respondent group including at least one or more first respondents and second respondents, the computer-readable recording medium on which is recorded a polling program for causing a computer to function as:

a first question unit means configured to present for presenting an input form with a question to a first respondent;

a free reply unit means for configured to obtain -obtaining-a free reply by accepting input onto the input form by a first respondent of an unguided reply to said question;

a first storage sending unit configured to send a means for processing server the storing the free reply input by the first respondent as a reply option to said question;

a closing unit configured to close -means for closing the input form presented to the first respondent;

a receiving unit configured to receive, from the processing server, an input form with the question and the free reply as a reply option to said question;

a second question unit configured to present means for presenting an the received input form with said question and the stored-free reply to a second respondent after storing the input free reply; and

~~an accepting unit configured to accept means for accepting a choice of the stored free reply as a reply to said question on the input form presented to the second respondent.~~

13. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method performed by a processor-terminal comprising:

displaying a question;

displaying at least one or more predetermined reply options to the displayed question, and accepting selection of any of the predetermined reply options, or input of an unguided reply to the question on an input form;

determining whether a free reply is being entered;

determining, upon a free reply being entered, whether the free reply being entered and any of the predetermined reply options will be substantially the same before the input of the free reply has finished;

supporting, upon said determining having determined that the free reply and a predetermined reply option will be substantially the same, supporting input of the free reply or selection of the predetermined reply option; and

closing the input form.

14. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 2, further comprising a first determining performed by the processing server of determining whether a free reply input by a first respondent and a predetermined reply option presented in said presenting are substantially the same, wherein said presenting further representing at least one predetermined reply option.

15. (CURRENTLY AMENDED) A polling method according to claim 5, further comprising confirming performed by the processing server of if said first determining determines that said free reply input by said first respondent and said predetermined reply option are substantially the same, accepting from said first respondent confirmation as to whether the determination is correct; wherein

said compiling is carried out if said determination is confirmed to be correct.

16. (NEW) A polling system comprising:

a terminal presenting a question to a first respondent, obtaining a free reply by accepting an unguided reply; and

a processing server storing the free reply as an reply option to be presented to a second respondent by the terminal.